# Advisory Committee Meeting Monday, March 1, 2010

## **Attendees:**

Committee Chair - Bill Theis Town Chair - Steven Threefoot Town Treasurer - David Michelson Town Secretary – Elaine Hickey Trustees - Mike Curtis, Connee McKinney Archives -Lisa Mullinax Audit - Cookie Ohlson **Budget-Jeffrey Politis** Buzz Ware Village Center – Warren Rosenkranz Civic – Sue Rothrock Community Planning – No one present Forest – Elizabeth Varley Playground - Larry Walker Registration – Cecilia Vore Safety - Denis O'Regan Visitor - Marianne Cinaglia

**ADVISORY** – Chair Bill Theis called the meeting to order at 7:40 PM

## **Election of Officers & Committee Members**

Bill announced that there is a full slate of nominees for officer and committee elections. Registration Chair Cecilia Vore said there is a new ballot format which will make it easier for voters to see exactly how many candidates they can vote for per committee. Also there will no longer be an indicator for incumbents. Beth Stevenson has withdrawn her name from the Safety Committee nomination. Cecilia asked Larry Walker if Leah Walker is living in Arden. He said she was a college student and will be moving back to Arden.

## **TRUSTEES** – Connee McKinney

Trustees will report on Lease Transfers and Vacant Houses. There will be an outreach meeting on Sunday, March 21, 1-3 PM to talk about variances and surveys.

## **Buckingham Green Lawsuit**

Connee will bring a Motion to accept one of two options regarding the Buckingham Green lawsuit; either to accept the defendant's engineering report which only allows for the repair of damage done on the Arden side of Sherwood Forest with no preventive maintenance for future damage, or the option to continue pursuing the lawsuit. There's no guarantee that we will get satisfaction with either option. If we continue, it will cost us more money; if we settle it could still cost us more money. The lawyer representing Arden will attend Town Meeting to answer questions. Town Chair Steven Threefoot emphasized the fact that the Town needs to be involved in the signing of any agreements.

## **TOWN CHAIR** – Steven Threefoot

# **February Snowstorm Expenses**

By this Friday we need to submit to DEMA any costs related to dealing with the recent snowstorms. All committees need to submit vouchers and volunteer hours for work done between Feb.

5 and Feb. 14. He will send an email reminder about this. DEMA will submit the information to FEMA for possible reimbursement.

# **FOIA request from Carol DiGiovanni**

Resident Carol DiGiovanni has submitted a request for financial information associated with any road work done this and last fiscal year. That request will be met this week. This leads us to putting into place a "copying fee" for FOIA requests.

# **Standing Vouchers**

To get a more structured handle on committee budgets and paying bills in a timely manner, we will be setting up Standing Vouchers for services for which a committee needs to make regular payments, e.g. Civic with Greens maintenance or BWVC with oil delivery or telephone bills. For anything that is not a regular expense, committees will still have to submit a voucher.

# **TREASURER** - David Michelson

#### **End of Fourth Quarter**

Quarterly financial reports will be going out to all committees. Fiscal Year ends March 31. David urges all committees to get their vouchers/bills in before that. Committees have been notified about their unspent funds. Surpluses could be used to help pay some of the snowstorm expenses. There is no mechanism in place yet for rolling money over into the next year. David also requested that the Trustees transfer funds to the Village in 3 or 4 increments instead of 2. Connee pointed out that the need to wait until taxes are paid before making the second transfer.

#### **AUDIT** – Cookie Ohlson

## **General Fund/ Prudent Reserve**

Cookie asked for clarification on where unspent budgeted funds go at the end of the year. Basically it remains in the general fund or prudent reserve. Jeffrey Politis explained that it doesn't necessarily keep growing. The Assessors look at the prudent reserve each year and can decide to lower the assessment if the reserve is high. It is the Trustees who build a prudent reserve and transfer money to the Village. The Budget Committee and Trustees need to meet to discuss the nuances of this prudent reserve and transfer mechanism.

Cookie will perform the audit on March 10 at 6:00 PM.

# **BUDGET** - Jeffrey Politis

#### **New Budget Spreadsheet Format**

Jeff will distribute the three year budget projection for review. There is a lot of wiggle room since it is another 6 months before we get the County tax fees. The Committee is predicting an increase of 15% in School and County taxes for 2012 and an increase of 10% for both 2013 and 2014. The Budget spreadsheet has changed. The Town and the BWVC expenses have been moved from budget to non-budget expenses. The Committee has come up with a general expense for the BWVC. BWVC is the only committee that has off-setting income. On the spreadsheet, a positive number means it is an expense; a negative number means it goes against the expense as income. The BWVC Town Assembly subsidy is the money the Town gives to the BWVC. The number appears twice, once as Income in the BWVC Budget and as Expense in the Town Budget. There was discussion regarding using the word "subsidy" to indicate the money the Town gives to the BWVC. "Support" was suggested as a less negative sounding word. Denis O'Regan feels there should be disclosure from the BWVC when their spending surpasses the amount of "support" that was budgeted and voted on by the Town Assembly.

#### **Prudent Reserve**

Maintaining the BWVC building is a financial liability. In the past the Trustees took care of all those expenses. Now the BWVC falls under the Town Budget and there is no reserve in the Town Budget to fall back on. The Budget Committee doesn't have a clear understanding of how we tap into the prudent reserve for the Town. When it was under the Trustees, the Trustees had sole discretion. The Town doesn't have sole discretion over the prudent reserve. We need a policy on how the Town can receive money from the prudent reserve when the need exceeds the \$25,000.00 that is in the Town's contingency fund. This will not be brought up at the March Town Meeting but we need to start working on it. The Budget Committee could work with the Town Treasurer to come up with a policy that eventually the Town Assembly can vote on. The Committee has budgeted \$10,000.00 each year for 2012, 2013, and 2014 to build up a contingency fund. Connee McKinney voiced concern over that amount. She said that in the past any profits from the BWVC use to go into a Maintenance fund, however the BWVC does not forecast a profit and feels budgeting a growing contingency fund is necessary. Denis O'Regan voiced concern that building a capital fund will make it too easy to spend. In the past, money was raised for specific purposes, e.g. installing new windows in the BWVC. The Budget Committee feels that yes, in the past the Trustees could provide funds from the prudent reserve, but now the Town would have to ask the Trustees for money, and they could say "no." If the Town Assembly says they don't want to budget for a capital fund, then they will remove it from the Budget. Steven suggested it is okay to bring it up at Town Meeting with a clear explanation of the numbers. The funds should be restricted. It could be announced at this Town Meeting that it will be up for discussion and formal proposal at the June Town Meeting.

# **Registration Budget**

Cecilia asked why there was no expenditure for Registration in 2008-2009. Elizabeth Varley explained that only expenses for Special Town Meetings or Special Referendums come out of the Registration Budget. Regular Town Meeting and Referendum expenses come out of the Administration Budget. Jeffrey commented that we will have a better handle and explanation of committee expenses as the years go by.

## **ARCHIVES** – Lisa Mullinax – No Report

# **BWVC** – Warren Rosenkranz - No Report

Sue Rothrock asked if the BWVC gets money from Ardentown and Ardencroft. Warren replied yes, but it is not the same amount that Arden gives. Steven requested that Warren talk about this year's expenses at the Town Meeting by explaining what caused the BWVC to go over, by \$6,000 or so, what was budgeted.

## **CIVIC** – Sue Rothrock

# **Snow Plowing and Damaged Trees**

Planned road repair was not completed due to the February snowstorms. Over \$10,000 was spent on snow plowing. If people feel their streets are not being plowed, they need to call the Civic phone.

**New Street Signs** have gone up.

# **COMMUNITY PLANNING** – Not present

#### **FOREST** – Elizabeth Varley

- 1. Tree work has been done and more is planned after the start of the new fiscal year.
- 2. The committee is tentatively planning on raising awareness of the "invasives" problem by having an Ivy Ball.

3. They are also planning to restore the wetland area in the Sherwood Forest annex with native plantings and are putting out feelers to people for advice on how to best handle that.

Cecilia asked about the drain that was overflowing about a year ago behind the Marconi's. She'd sent the Forest Committee the information she got from the Water Dept. who said the situation looked like a good candidate for a new process they have for relining the drain pipe.

# **PLAYGROUND** – Larry Walker

The committee had planned on redoing the playground area with mulch at the top of the Village Green but snow prevented that. Since we need to save money that job could roll over to next fiscal year.

# **REGISTRATION** – Cecilia Vore

#### **March Elections**

Elections should be at the top of the Town Meeting agenda – right after approval of the Minutes. Cecilia will not be at the meeting (she'll be downstairs with the Shakespeare Gild auditions) but the committee will conduct the election procedure.

#### **Red Book**

Right now we have no Legislative Reference Committee so the Registration Committee has been distributing the Red Book. Cecilia would like to put the Red Book on the website. She has the electronic files and will work on it. It needs updating. Committees should send their update information to Cecilia. She'll put a few pages up at a time. It will be set up so that people can download pdf files but not be able to edit. In the future, when there are changes, committees can send those changes to the Town Secretary who will then do the update.

## **Absentee Voting**

The committee will write up a policy for Absentee Voting. Marianne Cinaglia attended this Advisory Meeting to hear the process that the committee formulated. She thought it would be ready for presentation at the March Town Meeting. The committee has not had time to do that yet. Cecilia explained that the process will be to have the Ballot ready right after the March Advisory Meeting. People needing an Absentee Ballot will then be able to pick up one at the Town Office where they will sign an affidavit explaining why they cannot attend the March Town Meeting. The committee will have to find out how to implement this process by looking at past Town Meetings to see how similar processes were handled. They hope to have the process in place by the 2011 March election. At this coming March Town Meeting the committee will announce that the process for Absentee Voting will be presented at the June Town Meeting. Steven Threefoot mentioned that it would be good to see the process implemented as an Ordinance, but the committee can decide.

## **SAFETY** – Denis O'Regan – No Report

The Playground Committee will provide the March Town Meeting refreshments. Discussion- There appears to be no reason why the June Town Meeting cannot be held on its regularly scheduled date of June 28, 2010. Meeting adjourned at 9:15 PM

Respectfully submitted, Elaine Hickey Secretary Village of Arden